

BRIDE IN THE GARBAGE TRUCK

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by James Collins

Winters in New York City can be devastating. When the snow gets over 10 inches deep, city streets are subjected to hardening of the arteries. Snow is everywhere, parked cars look like small white burial mounds all in line on both sides of the street as far as the eye can see. Traffic comes to a halt. Main streets have minimal clearance and larger vehicles inch their way through mounds of slush and ice. Small passenger cars are abandoned and littered all over the streets. Transportation is very limited and walking is treacherous.

Unfortunately, the McKeon family had scheduled a wedding at the Lady Chapel in St. Patrick's Cathedral on a Saturday when Mother Nature decided to shut down the city. They were located in the Bronx on a rather long steep hill. The trip to the Cathedral meant they had to cross the Bronx, cross the Harlem River, enter Manhattan and go halfway down to 50 Street in Midtown where the wedding was scheduled. They had paid for and reserved a couple of limousines to transport the bride and the rest of the family members down to this glorious event.

The limousine showed up in the neighborhood on time but they could not get up the long treacherous hill and as a result were about four blocks away stranded in a major intersection with no chance of getting to the house to pick up the bride and the family. The McKeon household was a bedlam. The women experienced the excitement of the day and the dreadful knowledge that they could not leave the house to get to the limousines. Early on, they had spent all the time prepping and primping and the bride obviously was the center of attention. They knew there was snow outside and they knew it was a significant snowstorm, but they assumed the limo drivers would show up and take care of all the problems.

The phone call from the limo drivers indicating that they could not get up the hill was like a fire alarm going off in the house. The shouts became hysterical as they realize it is possible this event will not come off today. Relatives flew in from all over the country and took hotel rooms near the cathedral. They would get there but it did not look good for the bride at present.

The men of the family rushed out to see what was going on and what could they do. Two went down the hill a couple of blocks to locate the limousines. They inquired, found out all the information and were able to verify the limousines could not get up the hill.

The father of the bride, Tom, a very competent engineer, went up the hill to the top to see if he could find police or someone else who might be able to assist them getting the bride to the Cathedral. All the police cars either were stuck or otherwise engaged trying to handle numerous problems generated by the storm.

In New York City, the garbage trucks use huge plows on their front and they clear the city streets. Tom noted that the only thing moving on top of the hill was a major garbage truck

clearing the center of the road so that ambulances and fire trucks could get through. It is amazing what a little cash can do. Tom talked to the men running the garbage truck and for \$20 apiece, they agreed they would come down the hill, stop in front of his house, assist getting the bride out of the house, off the porch and into the garbage truck. They would then drive her down the hill to where the limousines were located and put her into the limousines, which would take her to the Cathedral. They would also make other trips to move the rest of the women in their fancy gowns down to the limousines.

When Tom got back to the house and notified them of his decision, the garbage truck was sitting alone and idling out in front of the porch while the garbage man shoveled a path to the door. The women were horrified. The arguments were unbelievable. It was only when Tom pointed out there was absolutely no other way to get the bride down to the Cathedral, were they willing to get into the garbage truck. The mother of the bride went out opened the door and nearly choked on the smell of the driver's compartment on the truck. She also noted the garbage, the grease and the dirt on the seats. When she came back in and reported the compartment was similar to being inside a garbage can the other women went pale. In between all the screaming, reason appeared. Somebody came up with the bright idea of using a number of sheets to cover the upholstery of the garbage truck so the bride's gown would not get spoiled or fouled. It was also agreed that the sheets would never be used in the house again. They would stay in the garbage truck.

Then the bride was dressed in a warm coat, hat, and boots. The veil, the crown, and her beautiful shoes were loaded into a big box that one of the women was to guard with her life. Then they wrapped the bride in a white sheet that covered her from shoulder to ankles so she had to walk in half steps.

The informal set up was amazing. Women carrying two or three sheets covered the inside of the seats and loaded the bride and two escorts into the passenger side of the truck. There was only room left for the driver while his assistant had to stand on the porch. The garbage truck slowly moved down the street pushing mounds of snow off to the side with its plow and disappeared out of sight. Five minutes later, it reappeared chugging up the hill moving snow again. It passed the house went up to the top of the hill turned around and reappeared in front of the porch. It made a few more trips before the entire wedding group at the house was loaded down into the limousines. They all took off into the white abyss and we later learned they all showed up at the church one hour late. The wedding went off and there was no disruption as all the rest of the weddings also were impacted by the storm. To this day, the family still talks about when the bride went to the wedding in a garbage truck.

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